

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. ROSS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1293, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER FRAUD PREVENTION ACT OF 2017

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 624) to restrict the inclusion of social security account numbers on documents sent by mail by the Federal Government, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 624

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Social Security Number Fraud Prevention Act of 2017".

SEC. 2. RESTRICTION OF SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS ON DOCUMENTS SENT BY MAIL.

(a) RESTRICTION.—An agency may not include the social security account number of an individual on any document sent by mail unless the head of the agency determines that the inclusion of the social security account number on the document is necessary.

(b) REGULATIONS.—Not later than 5 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the head of each CFO Act agency shall issue regulations specifying the circumstances under which inclusion of a social security account number on a document sent by mail is necessary. Such regulations shall include—

(1) instructions for the partial redaction of social security account numbers where feasible; and

(2) a requirement that social security account numbers not be visible on the outside of any package sent by mail.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and not later than the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth-year anniversary of such date of enactment, the head of each CFO Act agency shall submit to the Committee on Ways and Means and the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Finance and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate, and any other appropriate authorizing committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate, a report on the implementation of subsection (a) that includes the following:

(1) The title and identification number of any document used by the CFO Act agency during the previous year that includes the complete social security account number of an individual.

(2) For the first report submitted, a plan that describes how the CFO Act agency will comply with the requirements of subsection (a).

(3) For the final report submitted, the title and identification number of each document used by the CFO Act agency for which the head of the agency has determined, in accordance with regulations issued pursuant to subsection (b), that the inclusion of a social security account number on such document

is necessary, and the rationale for such determination.

(4) For any other report that is not the first or final report submitted, an update on the implementation of the plan described under paragraph (2).

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) AGENCY.—The term "agency" has the meaning given that term in section 551 of title 5, United States Code, but includes an establishment in the legislative or judicial branch of the Government (except the Senate, the House of Representatives, and the Architect of the Capitol, and any activities under the direction of the Architect of the Capitol).

(2) CFO ACT AGENCY.—The term "CFO Act agency" means the agencies listed in paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 901(b) of title 31, United States Code.

(e) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Subsection (a) shall apply with respect to any document sent by mail on or after the date that is 5 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. ROSS) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 624, the Social Security Number Fraud Prevention Act of 2017, introduced by my good friend from California, Representative DAVID VALADAO.

I want to start by thanking Chairman BRADY and Subcommittee Chairman JOHNSON from the Ways and Means Committee for their assistance in getting this bill to the floor. Their work on addressing the unnecessary use of Social Security numbers is well appreciated by all Americans across the country and especially Members in this body.

Mr. Speaker, we live in an interconnected world. Personal identifiers, such as Social Security numbers, are used for much more than just Social Security benefits. Social Security numbers are widely used to receive government services and to apply for services in the private sector, like opening bank accounts, credit cards, and even applying for college.

The extent to which Social Security numbers are a de facto national identifier has heightened concerns about identity theft. In the wrong hands, a stolen Social Security number can be used for devastating effects.

This bill helps move the government closer to the goal of minimizing unnecessary use of Social Security numbers. All entities in the Federal Government will be prohibited from sending a So-

cial Security account number by mail, unless the head of the entity deems it necessary.

The 24 major CFO Act agencies will also have to issue regulations specifying the circumstances under which inclusion of a Social Security number is deemed necessary. They will have to ensure numbers are redacted partially, where feasible, and to ensure no numbers are visible from the outside of a mail piece.

Finally, agencies will be required to report to Congress on their progress in implementing the requirements of the law.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is very important. The Social Security Administration alone sends 223 million notices containing a full Social Security number every year. We must take care to properly safeguard the personally identifiable information of American citizens. The consequences of failure can be dire.

In 2015, the Office of Personnel Management experienced a major data breach where the personally identifiable information for 22 million Americans was compromised.

The Oversight Committee majority staff report recommended Federal agencies reduce the collection of Social Security numbers and other personally identifiable information.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is a step in the right direction. I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 624, the Social Security Number Fraud Prevention Act of 2017, as amended.

Introduced by our colleague, Mr. VALADAO from California, this bill is a commonsense step to addressing an enormously growing problem of identity theft and protecting the personal information of every American.

Each year, 18 million Americans become victims of identity theft. That is 18 million. A leading cause of this problem is the unauthorized acquisition of Social Security numbers by criminals.

H.R. 624 would address this issue by restricting the instances in which agencies may include the full Social Security numbers on documents sent through the mail. The bill would prohibit agencies from including those numbers on mailed correspondence unless the head of an agency himself or herself determines that inclusion is absolutely essential.

Agencies would be required to issue regulations delineating the situations in which Social Security numbers are necessary, and would be instructed to partially redact numbers wherever feasible.

□ 1445

Agencies would also be expressly prohibited from making Social Security numbers visible on the outside of any mailed packages.

In recent years, many agencies have taken steps to reduce their use of Social Security numbers, and this bill would simply codify some of those practices agencies have already adopted. For instance, the Social Security Administration itself no longer prints Social Security numbers on its annual cost-of-living adjustment notices or benefit checks, and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services is in the process of removing Social Security numbers from the Medicare cards issued to beneficiaries.

These steps are critical to ensuring that the Federal Government adequately safeguards the personally identifiable information of individuals and does everything it can to protect Americans from identity theft.

Although this bill helps provide a lot of protection, reducing the threat of identity theft by removing Social Security numbers from mailed items is not always as easy as it seems. Many agencies confront high costs when reprogramming outdated legacy information technology systems to allow mailings to be printed differently.

Agencies across the Federal Government have been reluctant to retire those legacy IT systems because of funding constraints that limit IT investments, slow modernization, and force agencies to defer needed IT upgrades in favor of some more pressing, urgent problems.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the important responsibility Congress has to fund these IT modernization efforts as it considers this bill.

Mr. Speaker, the Social Security Number Fraud Prevention Act is a good, bipartisan bill that is necessary to protect the American public. I urge my colleagues to support its passage, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. VALADAO), who is the author of this bill.

Mr. VALADAO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of my bill, H.R. 624, the Social Security Number Fraud Prevention Act, legislation to protect Americans—especially children, veterans, and the elderly—from identity theft.

Not long ago, I was approached by a constituent in my district who showed me a letter she had received from the Social Security Administration. The document she showed me contained the full Social Security number, name, and address clearly printed.

Upon further investigation, we found that the Social Security Administration had also printed postcards which contained the full Social Security number of the intended recipient clearly visible on the exterior of the mailing. Even more concerning, the practice of printing Social Security numbers on government documents is not exclusive to the Social Security Administration, but occurs throughout every department of the Federal Government.

In today's digital age, we hear more and more about the importance of protecting our identity. Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in the United States. It threatens the financial security of millions of Americans as well as the economic stability of the United States as a whole. In fact, every 2 seconds, another American becomes the victim of identity fraud. Even worse, these crimes tend to impact vulnerable populations, such as children, the elderly, and veterans, the most.

Despite these alarming statistics, there is a high prevalence of needlessly printed Social Security numbers on documents issued by the Federal Government. My legislation puts an end to this unacceptable practice and limits when the Federal Government can mail documents that contain an individual's full Social Security number.

Social Security was established to provide older Americans financial security during their retirement years, not to jeopardize that security by negligently handling someone's personal information.

My bill, the Social Security Number Fraud Prevention Act, would prevent the Federal Government from mailing documents that contain full Social Security numbers unless absolutely necessary. This requires Federal agencies to partially redact Social Security numbers on the documents whenever possible.

Please join me in supporting this commonsense legislation that will help all Americans avoid falling victim to one of the fastest growing crimes in the United States.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA).

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Virginia for yielding, and I also want to take this time to thank the gentleman from Florida and my colleague and good friend, Congressman VALADAO, for the introduction of this legislation, H.R. 624, which I support.

Mr. Speaker, as we know, identity theft throughout the country is a very significant problem. It becomes even more compounded in this day of the internet when we have to deal with a whole host of issues that make the ability to steal one's identity even more easily done. This measure attempts to try to address a part of that challenge by dealing with the issue of Social Security numbers.

We all know Social Security numbers are key information used to identify ourselves, and we know that if they fall into the wrong hands, they can be used to commit identity theft.

I think all of us remember when, at some point in our age, we got our Social Security number and we memorized it, and it is something that is very important in our society today. But many thieves find these numbers are incredibly valuable because they are a link that can connect a person's

information across a whole host of agencies, systems, and databases in this age of the internet.

Criminals can use stolen Social Security numbers to file fraudulent tax returns, obtain loans, and commit other kinds of crimes. An estimated 13 million Americans experienced financial identity theft in 2014 alone, resulting in over \$16 billion—with a B—\$16 billion lost to fraud.

In 2007, to combat these issues, there was an Identity Theft Task Force that made recommendations to the administration on ways to eliminate the unnecessary collection, use, and display—the display, which this legislation attempts to address—of Social Security numbers.

Yesterday, the Government Accountability Office released testimony on these efforts by the Federal Government to reduce the collection, use, and display of Social Security numbers. In conclusion, the GAO testified that, until the Office of Management and Budget adopts more effective practices for guiding agency Social Security number reduction efforts, overall governmentwide reduction will likely remain limited and difficult to measure, and the risk of Social Security numbers being exposed and used to commit identity theft will remain greater than it need be. Again, this legislation attempts to help address that.

The Social Security Number Fraud Prevention Act would enact measures to help protect American citizens, especially children, veterans, and senior citizens, from identity theft and fraud. It does so by reducing the number of mailed documents the Federal Government sends to individuals that include full Social Security numbers.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I yield the gentleman from California an additional 1 minute.

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Virginia.

In addition, it also takes steps to ensure that, if inclusion is necessary, the number is not visible from the outside of a mailing. I think, probably, many of us have received mail that, in fact, had our Social Security number there and identified.

As I said at the outset, this is no silver bullet to stopping identity theft; it is a commonsense measure to reducing it.

Social Security, as we all know, is a promise made to those who have worked hard throughout their lives to contribute to the system, to contribute to the American way of life. It also provides those seniors who are living on their Social Security the ability to have dignity and additional security during their golden years. As a result, Congress must do what it can to reduce the strains on the program, particularly from fraud and theft.

For all of those reasons, I support this legislation, and I support Congressman VALADAO's efforts and my

good friends from Florida and Virginia for bringing this commonsense measure to the floor.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS).

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Florida, and I thank my colleague from Virginia for supporting this piece of legislation put forth by our friend and colleague from California, Congressman DAVID VALADAO.

The Social Security Number Fraud Prevention Act is a bill that should gain unanimous support in this institution. According to the Justice Department, identity theft affects nearly 18 million people, costing more than \$15 billion in 2014 alone. This represents roughly 7 percent of all Americans age 16 or older. In my home State of Illinois alone, in 2014, it was recognized that the FTC saw a 65 percent increase in identity theft. More than 14 percent of the victims are elderly.

We all know that Social Security numbers are the link to a key piece of information criminals use to steal people's identities. This commonsense piece of legislation takes a very important step to ensure that our Federal agencies, our government, funded by the hardworking taxpayers of this country, are not making this problem even worse.

This bill, as you have heard today, would restrict the use of Social Security numbers on documents sent via mail by the Federal Government unless the head of a department or agency determines the inclusion of such number is necessary—which I can't think of a single instance where that would be necessary, but I guess we have to put that in there anyway. This seems like a no-brainer, but we in this institution have to pass a bill to make sure that it happens, which is why I am a proud cosponsor of this bill.

I want to thank Congressman VALADAO again. I also want to thank Congress' newest father, our colleague from California, ERIC SWALWELL, for being a cosponsor of this legislation, too. This bill will have a real impact on reducing identity theft in this country, and I want to commend, once again, everybody on the floor today for their support.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is an important piece of legislation. This is one of the fastest growing crimes in our country: the diversion of Social Security checks and rebates. It is almost without any kind of corrective action. There are few prosecutions and even fewer convictions. So, if you are a criminal and you are looking for something that is relatively cost-free for you, this is the way to do it.

This bill would provide some important protections to the American public. I would hope that we build on this.

My friend from Florida and I serve on the Oversight and Government Reform

Committee, and we have heard testimony about this crime as it has grown exponentially over the last 5 or 6 years. It is my hope that U.S. attorneys all across America will put more emphasis on this crime and use their resources to go after people who are predators of American taxpayers, especially many of our seniors who rely on these checks or these rebates to augment and supplement their income. So there are victims of this crime, and they are the American taxpayer.

I think it is an important first step. I support the legislation, and I urge my colleagues to support it as well.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, we here have an obligation to provide for the common defense, and I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that includes that we provide to defend our citizenry from such crimes as identity theft. This bill is a step in the right direction.

I want to thank my good friend from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) for his efforts. I want to thank Mr. VALADAO from California for sponsoring this bill.

This is a bipartisan measure that will allow us to address the concerns of modern-day crimes of identity and of modern-day crimes of privacy. It is a bill that moves in the right direction. While it is not the panacea, it is a good first step to protecting our citizenry.

Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption by my colleagues, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. ROSS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 624, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to restrict the inclusion of social security account numbers on Federal documents sent by mail, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

REDUCING REGULATORY BURDENS ACT OF 2017

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GIBBS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. YOHIO). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 348 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 953.

The Chair appoints the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. DUNCAN) to

preside over the Committee of the Whole.

□ 1500

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 953) to amend the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act and the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to clarify Congressional intent regarding the regulation of the use of pesticides in or near navigable waters, and for other purposes, with Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. GIBBS) and the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. NAPOLITANO) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. GIBBS. Mr. Chair, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Today we are considering H.R. 953, the Reducing Regulatory Burdens Act of 2017, introduced to clarify congressional intent regarding pesticide use in or near navigable waters.

The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, otherwise known as FIFRA, is the appropriate Federal statute to govern safety and the use of pesticides.

FIFRA first passed in 1910, 62 years before the Clean Water Act was passed. In 2009, the Sixth Circuit Court decision, the National Cotton Council v. EPA, changed how this all works. For years before the Clean Water Act, pesticide use was regulated by the EPA under FIFRA. Under FIFRA, the EPA regulates and approves pesticides for safe use under the label, and they have full jurisdiction under FIFRA.

The EPA previously ruled that using pesticides under FIFRA-approved use does not require a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System, otherwise known as NPDES, permit under the Clean Water Act.

Because of this court decision in 2009, those who have been safely applying products to control pest populations now must comply with additional NPDES permitting.

Some of my colleagues across the aisle have called this Groundhog Day in the past. I agree. Time after time, they have supported increasing the regulations just for regulation's sake. They are even willing to risk public health and outbreaks of Zika and West Nile virus.

The Sixth Circuit Court decision ignored the congressional intent when the FIFRA and the Clean Water Act were passed. The court ignored sensible agency interpretation, it ignored years of regulatory precedent, it expanded the clean water jurisdiction beyond the scope set by Congress and over areas already appropriately regulated. The court decision placed burden on the